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FOREWORD

Dr. Charles Brant was associated from 1948 to 1951 with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Cornell University, from which he received his degree in cultural anthropology with special emphasis on the cultures of South-east Asia. The University in 1947 had inaugurated on the campus and afield a teaching and research program designed to explore cultural repercussions related to the introduction of new technology and scientific ideas in a variety of peasant communities. Among the projects established in connection with this program in anthropology, and sponsored also by the Cornell Department of Far Eastern Studies, were village researches which had been begun in eastern Uttar Pradash, India, and in the central rice plain of Thailand. The University therefore welcomed Dr. Brant's suggestion that he carry out a community study in Burma, a region which had been united with India administratively and which shared many cultural elements with Thailand.

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As recounted in the introduction of this report, political and military conditions in Burma in 1949 forced several changes in research plans and eventually made it necessary to retreat to Rangoon, where the present study was finally begun late in that year. However, the choice of a community adjacent to the primary metropolis of Burma in which to carry on the field research admirably fitted the purposes of the larger comparative anthropological program. It has made possible a point by point comparison of the urban influences of Rangoon on this village with influences exerted by Bangkok on the village being studied under this program which is located some twenty miles from the center of the Thai capital. It has also proved possible for Cornell to sponsor the study of a second Burmese village, on the outskirts of Mandalay, in which Mr. John Broha conducted research during 1952 and 1953.

So little is known of contemporary conditions in the Burmese village that this study, as Dr. Brant suggests, will contribute towards filling a large void. Readers who know Burma will find much in the report with which they are familiar. They will be particularly interested, however, in the valuable case study in Part III of the solution found for the tensions between the Burman villagers and the Indian minority. And they will obtain a picture of the radical changes in behavior which mark an inevitably increasing sector of Burmese rural life. These new behaviors incorporate conflicts between a peasant technology which can hardly be altered for some time and the new ideas and ideals which can only be rapidly enlarged--conflicts for which flight is no solution.

Lauriston Sharp, Director
Southeast Asia Program

Department of Far Eastern Studies
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York
April, 1954

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a summary report of field research which I conducted in the village of Tadagale, Insein District, Burma, during the period November, 1949, to April, 1950. The work was made possible by a scholarship under the Fulbright Program, supplemented by an Area Research Training Fellowship granted by the Social Science Research Council. I am indebted to both of these organizations for the support of my work.

A word seems in order concerning the selection of Tadagale as a community for study. It was my original intention, before I reached Burma and learned in detail of the then prevailing conditions, to do fieldwork among the Burmese of the delta or dry zone, using as a base a single village which would more or less exemplify contemporary Burmese peasant culture. Nothing was more impossible, in view of the internal conditions, and the plan had to be abandoned. After several months of efforts to shift my research to the Shan States, during which time one project had to be abandoned before it actually commenced, and another came to an abrupt halt in its second week -- both because of the spread of the internal disturbances to the areas concerned -- it became clear that the greatest assurance of continuity of research was to be found in the general area near Rangoon. After a brief survey of communities within a few miles radius of the capital, Tadagale was chosen. It appeared most suitable for several reasons, among them accessibility, manageable size, and, owing to its contact with Rangoon, the possibility of studying socio-cultural change.

The fieldwork was done by interviewing of informants, by direct observation of events and behavior, and by the compilation of a detailed census concerning household membership, occupations, marital status, religious affiliation, group membership, income, and other matters. With the aid of a fluent, college-educated interpreter fieldwork was carried on daily.

This paper does not purport in any way to be a complete or definitive study. An approximation to such a report, I am convinced, can result only from fieldwork done under a set of conditions very different from those that were possible for the research here reported. These should include extended continuous residence (minimally one year) in the community by the investigator, and participation by him in community life without self-imposed or assumed separateness or distinction from the people; and a command of the native language adequate to conduct interviews and conversations without the use of interpreters. For Southeast Asia especially, the real fulfillment of such conditions is most difficult, but to the extent that they are met in ethnographic work the material obtained will possess richness and depth. Since, for a variety of reasons, these conditions could not be met in my study of Tadagale, no apology is offered for the inadequacies of this report. It is well, however, in these days of studies of 'cultures from afar' and other short-cut methods of fieldwork, to indicate how we have worked and how our results are thereby affected. Since knowledge of contemporary Burmese village culture is virtually non-existent, a report such as this perhaps may be regarded as a small contribution towards filling a large void.

I am much indebted to Miss C. A. Rustom, of Mandalay, my interpreter, whose tact and insight certainly minimized the limitations that are inherent in fieldwork done by means of an interpreter. Dr. Paul F. Cressey of Wheaton College (Massachusetts), who was teaching in Rangoon University at the time of

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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acts of theirs and customs, which I had seen and noted, but of which I did not know the reason. We all know how hard it is to see into the heart even of our own people, those of our flesh and blood who are with us always, and whose ways are our ways, and whose thoughts are akin to ours. And if this be so with them, it is ten thousand times harder with those whose ways are not our ways, and from whose thoughts we must be far apart. It is true that there are no dark places in the lives of the Burmese as there are in the lives of other Orientals. All is open to the light of day in their homes and in their religion, and their women are the freest in the world. Yet the barriers of a strange tongue and a strange religion, and of ways caused by another climate than ours, is so great that, even to those of us who have every wish and every opportunity to understand, it seems sometimes as if we should never know their hearts. It seems as if we should never learn more of them than just the outside—that curiously varied outside which is so deceptive, and which is so apt to prevent our understanding that they are men just as we are and not strange creations from some far-away planet.

So when I settled down and sought to know more of the meaning of what I had seen, I thought that first of all I must learn somewhat of their religion, of that mainspring of many actions, which seemed sometimes admirable, sometimes the reverse, and nearly always foreign to my ideas. It is true that I knew they were Buddhists, that I recognised the yellow-robed monks as followers of the word of Gaudama the Buddha, and that I had a general

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 18?? AP1 Burma
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114 acquaintance with the theory of their faith as picked
121 up from a book or two—notably, Rhys Davids'
779 'Buddhism' and Bishop Bigandet's book—and from many inconsequent talks with the monks and others. But the knowledge was but superficial, and I was painfully aware that it did not explain much that I had seen and that I saw every day.

So I sent for more books, such books as had been published in English, and I studied them, and hoped thereby to attain the explanations I wanted; and as I studied, I watched as I could the doings of the people, that I might see the effects of
775 causes and the results of beliefs. I read in these
779 sacred books of the mystery of Dharma, of how a man has no soul, no consciousness after death; that to the Buddhist 'dead men rise up never,' and that those who go down to the grave are known no more. I read that all that survives is the effect of a man's actions, the evil effect, for good is merely negative, and that this is what causes pain and trouble to the next life. Everything changes, say the sacred books, nothing lasts even for a moment. 'It will be, and it has been,' is the life of man. The life that lives to-morrow in the next incarnation is no more the life that died in the last than the flame we light in the lamp to-day is the same that went out yesternight. It is as if a stone were thrown into a pool—that is the life, the splash of the stone; all that remains, when the stone lies resting in the mud and weeds below the waters of forgetfulness, are the circles ever widening on the surface, and the ripples never dying, but only spreading farther and farther away. And all this

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

Whence, then, come their acts? for their acts seem to show that they hold riches to be a good thing. What is to be accepted as their belief: the Book they say they believe, which condemns riches, or their acts, by which they show that they hold that wealth is a good thing—ay, and if used according to their ideas of right, a very good thing indeed?

So, it seemed to me, would a Burman be puzzled if he came to us to find out our belief; and as the Burman's difficulty in England was, *mutatis mutandis*, mine in Burma, I set to work to think the matter out. How were the beliefs of a people to be known, and why should there be such difficulties in the way? If I could understand how it was with us, it might help me to know how it was with them.

I have thought that the difficulty arises from the fact that there are two ways of seeing a religion —from within and from without—and that these are as different as can possibly be. It is because we forget there are the two standpoints that we fall into error.

In every religion, to the believers in it, the crown and glory of their creed is that it is a revelation of truth, a lifting of the veil, behind which every man born into this mystery desires to look.

They are sure, these believers, that they have the truth, that they alone have the truth, and that it has come direct from where alone truth can live. They believe that in their religion alone lies safety for man from the troubles of this world and from the terrors and threats of the next, and that those

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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alone who follow its teaching will reach happiness hereafter, if not here. They believe, too, that this truth only requires to be known to be understood and accepted of all men; that as the sun requires no witness of its own warmth, so the truth requires no evidence of its truth.

It is to them so eternally true, so matchless in beauty, so convincing in itself, that adherents of all other creeds have but to hear it pronounced and they must believe. To them the question, How do you know that your faith is true? is as vain and foolish as the cry of the wind in an empty house. And if they be asked wherein lies their religion, they will produce their sacred books, and declare that in them is contained the whole matter. Here is the very word of truth, herein is told the meaning of all things, herein alone lies righteousness. This, they say, is their faith: that they believe in every line of it, this truth from everlasting to everlasting, and that its precepts, and none other, can be held by him who seeks to be a sincere believer. And to these believers the manifestation of their faith is that its believers attain salvation hereafter. But as that is in the next world, if the unbeliever ask what is the manifestation in this, the believers will answer him that the true mark and sign whereby a man may be known to hold the truth is the observance of certain forms, the performance of certain ceremonies, more or less mystical, more or less symbolical, of some esoteric meaning. That a man should be baptized, should wear certain marks on his forehead, should be accepted with certain rites, is generally the outward and visible sign of a believer,

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and the badge whereby others of the same faith have known their fellows.

It has never been possible for any religion to make the acts and deeds of its followers the test of their belief. And for these reasons: that it is a test no one could apply, and that if anyone were to attempt to apply it, there would soon be no Church at all. For to no one is it given to be able to observe in their entirety all the precepts of their prophet, whoever that prophet may be. All must fail, some more and some less, but generally more, and thus all would fall from the faith at some time or another, and there would be no Church left. And so another test has been made necessary. If from his weakness a man cannot keep these precepts, yet he can declare his belief in and his desire to keep them, and here is a test that can be applied. Certain rites have been instituted, and it has been laid down that those who by their submission to these rites show their belief in the truth and their desire to follow that truth as far as in them lies, shall be called the followers of the faith. And so in time it has come about that these ceremonial rites have been held to be the true and only sign of the believer, and the fact that they were but to be the earnest of the beginning and living of a new life has become less and less remembered, till it has faded into nothingness. And so, instead of the life being the main thing, and being absolutely necessary to give value and emphasis to the belief, it has come to pass that it is the belief, and the acceptance of the belief, that has been held to hallow the life and excuse and palliate its errors.

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121 Thus of every religion is this true, that its essence is a belief that certain doctrines are revelations of eternal truth, and that the fruit of this truth is the observance of certain forms. Morality and works may or may not follow, but they are immaterial compared with the other. This, put shortly, is the view of every believer.

But to him who does not believe in a faith, who views it from without, from the standpoint of another faith, the whole view is changed, the whole perspective altered. Those landmarks which to one within the circle seem to stand out and overtop the world are to the eyes of him without dwarfed often into insignificance, and other points rise into importance.

For the outsider judges a religion as he judges everything else in this world. He cannot begin by accepting it as the only revelation of truth; he cannot proceed from the unknown to the known, but the reverse. First of all, he tries to learn what the beliefs of the people really are, and then he judges from their lives what value this religion has to them. He looks to acts as proofs of beliefs, to lives as the ultimate effects of thoughts. And he finds out very quickly that the sacred books of a people can never be taken as showing more than approximately their real beliefs. Always through the embroidery of the new creed he will find the foundation of an older faith, of older faiths, perhaps, and below these, again, other beliefs that seem to be part of no system, but to be the outcome of the great fear that is in the world.

The more he searches, the more he will be sure

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that there is only one guide to a man's faith, to his soul, and that is not any book or system he may profess to believe, but the real system that he follows —that is to say, that a man's beliefs can be known even to himself from his acts only. For it is futile to say that a man believes in one thing and does another. That is not a belief at all. A man may cheat himself, and say it is, but in his heart he knows that it is not. A belief is not a proposition to be assented to, and then put away and forgotten. It is always in our minds, and for ever in our thoughts. It guides our every action, it colours our whole life. It is not for a day, but for ever. When we have learnt that fire burns, we do not put the belief away in a pigeon-hole of our minds, there to rust for ever unused, nor do we go straightway and put our hands in the flames. We remember it always; we keep it as a guiding principle of our daily lives.

A belief is a strand in the cord of our lives, that runs through every fathom of it, from the time that it is first twisted among the others till the time when that life shall end. And as it is thus impossible for the onlooker to accept from adherents of a creed a definition of what they really believe, so it is impossible for him to acknowledge the forms and ceremonies of which they speak as the real manifestations of their creed.

It seems to the onlooker indifferent that men should be dipped in water or not, that they should have their heads shaved or wear long hair. Any belief that is worth considering at all must have results more important to its believers, more valuable

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● 121 to mankind, than such signs as these. It is true that of the great sign of all, that the followers of a creed attain heaven hereafter, he cannot judge. He can only tell of what he sees. This may or may not be true; but surely, if it be true, there must be some sign of it here on earth beyond forms. A religion that fits a soul for the hereafter will surely begin by fitting it for the present, he will think. And it will show that it does so otherwise than by ceremonies.

For forms and ceremonies that have no fruit in action are not marks of a living truth, but of a dead dogma. There is but little thought of forms to him whose heart is full of the teaching of his Master, who has His words within his heart, and whose soul is full of His love. It is when beliefs die, and love has faded into indifference, that forms are necessary, for to the living no monument is needed, but to the dead. Forms and ceremonies are but the tombs of dead truths, put up to their memory to recall to those who have never known them that they lived and died long ago.

And because men do not seek for signs of the living among the graveyards of the dead, so it is not among the ceremonies of religions that we shall find the manifestations of living beliefs.

It is from the standpoint of this outsider that I have looked at and tried to understand the soul of the Burmese people. When I have read or heard of a teaching of Buddhism, I have always taken it to the test of the daily life of the people to see whether it was a living belief or no. I have accepted just so much as I could find the people have accepted, such as they have taken into their hearts to be with them

16:Fielding Hall G-8 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

for ever. A teaching that has been but a teaching or theory, a vain breath of mental assent, has seemed to me of no value at all. The guiding principles of their lives, whether in accordance with the teaching of Buddhism or not, these only have seemed to me worthy of inquiry or understanding. What I have desired to know is not their minds, but their souls. And as this test of mine has obliged me to omit much that will be found among the dogmas of Buddhism, so it has led me to accept many things that have no place there at all. For I have thought that what stirs the heart of man is his religion, whether he calls it religion or not. That which makes the heart beat and the breath come quicker, love and hate, and joy and sorrow—that has been to me as worthy of record as his thoughts of a future life. The thoughts that come into the mind of the ploughman while he leads his teams afield in the golden glory of the dawn; the dreams that swell and move in the heart of the woman when she knows the great mystery of a new life; whither the dying man's hopes and fears are led—these have seemed to me the religion of the people as well as doctrines of the unknown. For are not these, too, of the very soul of the people?

17; Orr E-5 (1950-1951) 1951 APA Burma
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Foreword

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Research in social and cultural Anthropology of the Burmese peoples is still a virgin field, and these Field Notes made by Dr. Kenneth Orr, Visiting Professor of Anthropology in the University of Rangoon, will be of great value both as a source-book and a handbook for students of Burmese culture and society.

To the non-Burmese reader, the information given in these Notes will be refreshingly new, for since "The Burman: his Life and Notions" by Sir James Scott writing under the pseudonym of "Shwe Yoe" was first published more than fifty years ago, there has been no book on the life and notions of the average Burman. To the Burmese reader, the information will not be new, but he will be pleasantly surprised to find that when noted down and scientifically viewed, his everyday beliefs and ideas assume a new importance.

The value of these Field Notes is the greater because Burmese society and culture are experiencing rapid changes due to greater contact with the outside world, and many interesting beliefs and ideas which are recorded in these pages will be remembered no more in the next few years. When I think of the many folk-tales, folk-songs and proverbs that were current during my childhood days, and now lost for ever, (and if I may say it, I am not very old), I cannot but despair that collections of such priceless treasures of the mind of the Burmese peoples will ever be made in time.

This Monograph is the first in the series which the Community Research Project of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Rangoon hopes to publish from time to time. It is indeed fitting that the first Monograph of the series should be written by Dr. Orr, for the successful introduction of Anthropology Studies into the University Curriculum, and the successful working out of the Community Research Project by the Department of Anthropology were in a great measure due to Dr. Orr. The first batch of Anthropology students in Burma, and the University of Rangoon itself will ever be grateful to Dr. Orr for the effective and valuable services he rendered to the cause of Anthropological research in Burma, during the short period of some eighteen months as Visiting Professor of the University.

9th November 1951. HTIN AUNG.

Introduction

This is a study of the falling standard of living of a Burmese family who were uprooted by the insurrection from their village home of Pathwe in 1949 and transplanted in a refugee camp in Rangoon. The family consisted of U Myaing - a fisherman aged 47; his wife Ma Aye Myaing, age 33, Daw Aw Zar, his mother, age 72, and four daughters - Ma Yin Shwe, age 14, Ma Khin Nyein, age 11, Ma Khni Saw, age 7, and Ma Win Tin, age 5.(1951).

An attempt is made to present quantitatively and qualitatively the items used in, and activities of everyday life in the home village as contrasted with the refugee camp. It is hoped this dynamic situation will reveal some of the basic facts of Burmese culture as they pertain to an average family. The bulk of the data was collected under my direction by Ko Sein Tu, Tutor of the Psychology Department, University of Rangoon, from August 1950 to May 1951. Ko Mya Tu, medical student at the University, helped in collecting the health data. Ma Khin Hmway, Assistant in Anthropology at the University, collected some of the more personal data from the ladies of the family. Professor Mohinda Nath, Head of the Department of Biology, University of Rangoon, kindly arranged for the scientific identification of the food items. Part of the data was collectedby the use of a tape recorder portions of which are reproduced verbation in this report. Miss Mary Watson, Head Stenographer of the Community Project, gave her valuable help in proof reading and typing the stencils for this report.

A setting for the better understanding of the facts of the family is given in sections on general Burmese Concepts which follow the family data. This was provided by Ko Maung Than, student at the University, who worked as my assistant from August through November 1951.

I am endebted to Dr. Htin Aung, Professor of Anthropology and Rector of the University of Rangoon for his constant support and encouragement in this study. I carried out the study as a Fulbright grantee in Anthropology attached to the United States Educational Foundation in Rangoon, to whose officers I am grateful

511 increasingly cognisant.

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722 Food: The relative quality of food has remained the same but

369 many expensive items have been discarded. Cheap foods when known previously have been elevated to importance in the camp diet but no previously unknown foods have been accepted - the new trifles which have become popular with the family are close enough in taste to the Pathwe trifles no longer available. Many foods which were secured free in Pathwe now cost money and have been discarded or reduced in quantity. The diet is reduced close to the essentials.

Social and ceremonial activities: The active life in which the family was involved in a small folk community has given way to life in an urban community where the major consideration is gaining a livelihood. But the new life is promising and exciting and retains the basic activities of the village.

Concluding Analysis

●121 Some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this particular set of circumstances; also the data suggests hypothesis of wider application to Burmese culture specifically and human societies generally.

185 Nature of the case: The case is clearly one of reduction in standard of living where the pattern of living remains unbroken. As such, certain deductions concerning the flexibility of the pattern can be drawn. The general situation is a contraction where items were sloughed-off as the pattern approached a minimum situation. The extreme level beyond which the pattern would have broken and/or the family ceased to exist was not reached. Data on such cases would be most valuable in extending this study. For example, I heard of a case supposedly during the Japanese occupation where a girl became too poor to afford a longyi and had to use gunny-sacks for clothing. The story goes that this girl committed suicide. Also, during the war some families are reported to have been reduced to eating "only rice and ngapi" - apparently the irreducible condition. Data on families expanding economically would also be necessary to carry this type of study in the other direction. U Myaing's case gives data on the flexibility of the Burmese culture pattern under certain circumstances from a median point of average standard of living, to a point near the minimum standard.

183 The conditions under which this flexibility was observed were

369 those of a displaced family uprooted from a folk society and replanted in an refugee community within an urban society. As such the case

gives important data on the process of urbanising villagers - the country people are an important group in the growth of the Burmese section of Rangoon; probably a large section of the present refugee population will stay in the future.

The concepts of pattern of living and standard of living: The Burmese pattern of living, or any culture pattern, is a universe of beliefs and practices manifested in acts and artifacts. The analogy of the "Universe" is a useful one in that it recognises a guiding body of understandings that controls the whole of the society (like "laws" of Universe) while emphasising the particular understandings that govern the various groups or classes of the society (like the "laws" of the Solar and other systems within the Universe). The "solar systems" are the standard levels of operations forming a comprehensive set of forces within itself. Families, like U Myaing's have a mobility, in the case understudy a forced change, which takes them out of one standard system into another. The adjustments which they undergo reflects the "laws" which control the various standard levels as well as the basic concepts controlling the whole of the society.

Each belief and practice has a range of expressions which can be defined. The particular expression practiced by a family is the standard or level of a phenomenon capable of expansion or contraction within prescribed limits. The ultimate limits are defined by the total range of expressions for the culture as a whole. But the practical limits for a family are defined by the possibilities of the society segment (community) in which they find themselves. Thus, the range of U Myaing's possibilities of expression are much greater in Rangoon than they were in Pathwe and greatly exceed his original ideas of what was possible. He may, for example, become a highly westernized political leader - although this seems unlikely in terms of his expectations. The westernized, urban spheres of Burmese culture is now opened to the family.

U Myaing is motivated by the basic expectations of the Burmese culture at a level applicable to his situation in terms of the possibilities of his social environment. In Pathwe, he was a fisherman and aspired to those things that fishermen should. In camp, he was at

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21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

PREFACE

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As a postgraduate research student working under the supervision of the Professor of English Literature, I wrote, at Trinity College, Dublin, a thesis entitled *A Comparative Study of Burmese with English and European Drama*. With the special permission of the Board of Trinity College and the supervising Professor, I spent three terms at the School of Oriental Studies (University of London), before submitting my thesis for the degree of Ph.D.

From the thesis for which I was granted the degree, I have omitted only some portions that dealt with the English and European Drama, and have given the work in its present form the new title, *Burmese Drama*.

To Dr W. F. Trench, Professor of English Literature at the University of Dublin, I owe a debt of gratitude the extent of which I can never fully express. I had not only the benefit of his lectures and personal supervision, but also his interest and help in my life outside the college walls. I had the great fortune to become acquainted with him before I went to Dublin, and it was through his recommendation that I was admitted to Trinity College. Without his kindness and help, the thesis would never have been written.

I am greatly indebted to Professor A. Berriedale Keith for his kindness and help when I was writing the chapters dealing with the Sanskrit drama.

My thanks are also due to the Provost and the Board of Trinity College, Dublin, for various favours granted, and to Miss E. M. Swann for her interest and help.

M.H.A.

Bar Library, Rangoon
March, 1935

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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Before proceeding any further perhaps I ought to explain what I mean when I speak of the 'origins' of Burmese drama. A great deal of confusion can result through the vagueness of the term 'origins'. By it I mean that point where the drama has taken some definite shape as drama, and not merely as dramatic elements. If we were to consider as origins all prehistoric dramatic elements in the life and customs of the nation, it would lead us nowhere. The worship of the *nats* in some form or other must have been developed by the tribes that first settled in Burma. And as religious ritual leads to music and dancing among primitive people, the worship led to the development of Burmese music and dancing. But we cannot take music and dancing as the origins of drama. No doubt music and dancing are necessary for the rise of a drama, but speech is necessary too, and yet we cannot say that the first attempt of man to express himself was the real origin of drama. It is vital to distinguish mere dramatic elements from true drama. In this connexion, Dr Keith's treatment of the origins of Sanskrit drama is enlightening. Many had contended before him that the Sanskrit drama had its origins in Vedic ritual. Dr Keith, however, rejects the theory. He recognizes the dramatic elements in Vedic ritual, but he recognizes them as such and not as the origins of the drama. No doubt the dramatic elements in the ritual gave some idea of the dramatic to the Indian people, but the drama did not arise out of them. It arose only when the great Indian epics had spread all over the country, for the true origin of the drama was in the recitation of the epics. With regard to Burmese drama, although the elements of the dramatic existed in the worship of the spirits and in various folk customs and folk feasts, the origin of the true drama was in the religious pageants and the *Nibhatkhin*.

(*c*) Ridgeway puts forward the tree in the middle of the 'stage' as evidence of the fact that the drama developed out of the *nat* worship. He contends that the tree is a symbol of the *nat*, because *nats* live in trees. He quotes from Colonel Yule's account of his embassy to Burma where the latter described a Burmese play in progress. There was no actual stage in those days. The play was given in the centre of an open place or yard, and the space for the actors was marked off. In the centre of that space was a tree. The ambassador inquired as to the purpose of the tree, but he was given a 'somewhat vague answer' that it represented a forest. He was not satisfied and put forward the theory that there must have been some belief connected with the tree, for it was present on all the occasions on which he

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
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BURMESE KINSHIP AND THE LIFE CYCLE: AN OUTLINE

CHARLES S. BRANT AND MI MI KHAING[1]

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

[121] OUR PURPOSE is to present and analyze some basic features of Burmese social organization. So numerous, elaborate and varied are the details of belief and behavior pertaining to kinship and the life cycle that to present them in a manner approximating completeness would be beyond the scope of a brief paper.

121 184 The material that follows, concerning the kinship system, patterns of customary behavior between various pairs of relatives, and the life cycle, is to be understood as applying to contemporary Burmese culture as it is manifested in the villages of Lower Burma. In and near the urban centers, where the secularizing [177] influences of the West have permeated indigenous custom to a greater extent, practice is likely to diverge from ideal patterns much more than in the small, homogeneous village communities. Our concern here is with the social life of the ordinary peasantry of Lower Burma. It is hoped that these data may contribute in some measure to the very scant and fragmentary knowledge of modern Burmese culture.[2]

THE KINSHIP SYSTEM

601 The basic consanguineal and affinal kinship terminologies are shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The kinship terms, corresponding to the numbers shown on the diagrams, are as follows:[3]

1. ʔaméi Mother.
2. ʔaphéi Father.
3. pharjî Parent's elder brother; parent's elder sister's husband.

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[122] 1 The first-named author of this paper expresses his thanks to the Board of Foreign Scholarships for appointment to a scholarship under the Fulbright Program, making possible the field research period 1949-50 in Burma, and to the Social Science Research Council for supplementary support in the form of a World Area Research Training fellowship.

2 The interested reader is referred to Shway Yoe's *The Burman: His Life and Notions*, first published in 1882 and most recently reprinted by Macmillan & Co., London, for the only fully-rounded account of Burmese culture. See also Mi Mi Khaing, *Burmese Family* (London, 1946) for a culturally insightful narrative of life in a Burmese family.

3 For assistance in transcription of the kinship terms thanks are due Professor W. S. Cornyn. The symbols follow the system employed in his *Outline of Burmese Grammar* (Baltimore: Linguistic Society of America, 1944).

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PREFACE

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"Buddhism," remarks a Christian theologian, "is the crux of all theories of religion."[1] It is at least true that statements concerning the nature of religion in general are frequently based on some estimate of Buddhism. Thus it is claimed, on the one hand, that Buddhist agnosticism proves the possibility of vital religion without belief in God, and even the superiority of such religion. On the other hand, it is suggested that later developments in Buddhist history prove that man cannot live without God: denial must ultimately yield to faith.

These and similar statements frequently assume that the Southern Buddhist is both more orthodox and more negative than his northern brother. And this more orthodox Buddhism, maintained today in the monasteries of Ceylon, Burma and Siam, indicates, it is sometimes said, that original Buddhism was not a religion at all but an ethic or philosophy in search of religion. The further suggestion is made that this search was only satisfied when Buddhism, re-born and travelling north to China and Japan, became syncretic, turning aside from the original narrow orthodoxy to quench its spiritual thirst at the wells of more positive, more speculative, more religious traditions.

If it is objected that such an estimate fails to account for the missionary vitality of original Buddhism, the reply is sometimes made that Southern Buddhism, while remaining substantially orthodox, degenerated and became a static, monastic scholasticism. To some this presents a picture of monkish moralists who found it possible to sustain an ascetic discipline through long centuries without any vision of those Eternal Realities which inspired similar disciplines elsewhere: a proof that man can dispense with such vision. Others see rather a picture of an excluded laity, outside the monasteries, a picture of ordinary men and women, Buddhists in name perhaps, but animists at heart, left so desolate that they must cling to primitive superstitions: a proof that man, normal man, cannot live without some vision, however inadequate, of the Beyond.

In this present work a very different picture of Southern Buddhism is presented. Here the monastic life is seen in full, creative relationship to

[1] W. R. Matthews, *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, chap. VIII, p. 162.

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Burmese life and culture, a relationship persisting through many centuries, and it is suggested that if Buddhism is indeed the crux of all theories of religion, this picture must be considered, not only by those more particularly interested in Buddhism, but by all students of Comparative Religion. It may also be of topical interest to those concerned with social and political developments in South-East Asia today.

For others, however, the main interest of this work may lie in its relevance to the subject of religious paradox, a subject which is receiving increasing attention by Christian theologians and others. "The observation that there is 'a way of paradox' demanding analysis and formulation," states a recent writer, "has been one of the major discoveries of Christian thought during the last century, and the task of relating it to classic ways of negation and analogy ... has only been taken up in our own time and is still far from the stage of achievement."[2] Meantime, various preliminary questions arise. It is, for example, sometimes taken for granted that the paradoxical expression of the Christian faith is, in itself, a proof of the distinctive character of the Christian Revelation. Or it may be held that this form of expression indicates the 'objective' character of the Christian Revelation. Discussions of the subject, however, are frequently determined by the evidence provided in the Judaic-Christian tradition alone. The present work points the need for a wider reference, and it is believed that the questions raised by the study of the paradox of Nirvana will be of considerable interest to theologians and others.

These questions are perhaps the more significant because they are the result of an empirical approach, an approach begun in Burma with an attempt to find some point of contact between Buddhist aspirations and the Christian faith. It was observed that, while certain monks were conditioned against any attempt to discuss grounds for belief in God, they were better disposed to consider the Christian hope of Eternal Life in relation to the Buddhist hope of Nirvana. Further study obliged recognition of the paradoxical expression of this Nirvana faith and the relation of this expression to similar language in other religions.

The fact that I was concerned to inquire what it was that constituted Buddhism a living religion, able to inspire the loyalty of the Burmese people through so many centuries, led gradually to the conclusion that paradoxical expression is intimately associated with vitality in religion. This conclusion was the more interesting because it was found to be affirmed by other writers, starting from different premises. A Swedish theologian, for example, claims that "every revival in the history of the

[2] J. V. Langmead Casserley, *The Christian in Philosophy* Part I, chap. I, pp. 41–42; cf. Part II, chap. I, pp. 179–182.

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church has been connected with a consciousness of the paradoxical content of faith."[3]

My inquiry, thus begun in Burma, was continued in Ceylon and India and concluded in New York. It has been pursued, with various interruptions, for some twenty years. In listing my acknowledgments, I am therefore aware that I may omit some who have given me generous help, more especially in the earlier days in Burma, since some of the notes relating to this period were lost during the Japanese invasion. I must also make it clear that acknowledgment of help given does not imply approval of the views expressed in this work. I am fully aware that some of these views are debatable. Any Western writer, knowing how much confusion has been caused by the temptation to read Western preconceptions into Buddhist thought, is bound to feel hesitant in expressing his own conclusions. He looks for the day when other scholars from the Orient such as the late U Shwe Zan Aung, themselves acquainted with our Western idiom, will assist our interpretation. Meantime he can only hope that his own efforts will promote that better understanding between East and West which may yield new insights in the universal search for truth.

While in India, I was invited to Union Theological Seminary, New York, and I am most grateful to the President, Dr Henry P. Van Dusen and the members of the Seminary for this invitation and the subsequent hospitality and facilities received there which enabled the preparation of this work as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy awarded by Columbia University. I am especially indebted to the following for their generous encouragement and assistance: Dr Horace L. Friess, Dr Frederick C. Grant, Dr Arthur Jeffery, Dr Richard Kroner, Dr August Karl Reischauer, Dr David E. Roberts and Dr Herbert W. Schneider.

In his devoted work for the Missionary Research Library, the late Mr Charles H. Fahs collected books and documents on Burma not available elsewhere, and I am glad to have this opportunity of acknowledging his most courteous assistance. I am similarly very grateful for the help I received from Dr Lucy W. Markley and the staff of the Union Seminary Library; Dr Marguerite Block of the Low Memorial Library, Columbia University; and from the librarians of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University.

To the Rev. R. F. Spear, American Methodist Mission, Pegu, Burma, I am very grateful for permission to read and quote from his MS thesis,

[3] G. Ljunggren, "The Paradox as a Theological Expression," *Swedish Theological Quarterly Review*, (1928), p. 333, quoted by Gustaf Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (trans. by Wahlstrom and Arden, 1948), Part I, p. 101.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Yes and No of Faith

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Three of the following chapters are concerned with Buddhism, and with Buddhism in a narrow field — the country of Burma. The ultimate interest, however, is much wider; the final issue is universal: it is the challenge of bewilderment which is everywhere twin brother to Faith, the No which accompanies our Yes. This final issue concerns the nature of that Reality which shapes our lives, both quickening and confounding our philosophy.

It is an issue which branches out into many questions. We may ask whether religion is a necessity or a luxury, a healthy response to life or a stumbling attempt at escape, a recognition of truth or a runaway from truth; whether philosophy or religion must have the final word, whether philosophy is religion's rival, religion's successor, religion's partner or religion's jailor; whether the language of religion corresponds to the language of philosophy, and whether one should be subject to the other; whether language most manifests faith when it is most voluble or when it exhibits a seemly reserve; whether denial of God is the final proof of God.

These and similar questions gather around the problem of paradoxical religious expression with which we shall be confronted in this inquiry. The resort to paradox arouses frequent distrust: it appears to cover a retreat from the challenge of logic to a realm of confused statement. Distrust is further inflamed by the fact that many who emphasise the significance of paradox fail to define the term. But the omission is understandable, since definition is beset by difficulties. It is easier to denote than to define, pointing to such examples as St. Augustine's confession: "What art Thou then, my God, what, I ask, save the Lord God ... most far and yet most near ... ever busy, yet ever at rest; gathering, yet never needing ... seeking, though Thou hast no lack.... Men give Thee more than Thou dost claim, that Thou shouldest be their debtor, yet who possesses aught that is not Thine? Thou payest debts which Thou dost not owe; Thou forgivest debts and losest nothing.... What can anyone say when he speaks of Thee?"[1]

[1] *Confessions*, Book 1, chap. IV (trans. by C. Bigg).

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Whenever religious faith ventures furthest with bold affirmation, it is obliged in the last resort to express this affirmation in negative as well as in positive terms. A Yes is uncomfortably joined with a No. This union may appear in one challenging proposition, or the Yes and the No may be found in separate passages related to the same symbol. In either case, the union is regarded as indissoluble, and a distinction is drawn between the language of religious paradox and the language of logical opposition. The logician makes ready with his knife to sever or prune the apparently discordant terms and thus relieve the tension. But his surgery is refused. "There can be no going behind or pretending to resolve the paradox. To evade the paradox is to lose the truth."[1] Whether this refusal is justified is one of the questions in debate. What perhaps is indicated by religious paradox is an imaginative contrast rather than a logical opposition, a contrast derived from the fact that the imaginative language of analogy is joined with the language of negation.

Any adequate discussion of the problems involved, however, depends upon a wide survey of the context of religious paradox, a survey not limited to the Christian tradition. This present inquiry may be regarded as a contribution towards such a survey, for the situation which gives rise to religious paradox is nowhere more strikingly exemplified than it is by the Buddhist symbol of Nirvana.

The essentially religious character of this Nirvana symbol, however, has been questioned, especially with reference to its statement in the context of Southern or Hīnayāna Buddhism, where the negative emphasis appears to obscure the basic affirmation.

Our inquiry, therefore, has two aspects. In the first place we are concerned to show that Burmese religion is a living tradition of Hīnayāna Buddhism in which Nirvana is the religious ultimate term, paradoxically affirmed. We begin in the field of historical interpretation.

Secondly, in order to exhibit the significance of the Nirvana paradox for Buddhism, we shall relate this expression to similar expressions of other religious ultimates in other traditions. This excursion into the field of comparative religion will raise the question of the significance of the language of paradox for the study of religion generally.

The more detailed examination of Burmese Buddhism which will concern us in the earlier chapters may seem to some a narrow and laborious approach to the larger questions which confront us in our comparative survey. But there is much to be said for such an approach to the problems presented by the study of Comparative Religion. Just as the traveller or missionary comes first into contact with some one, particular religion, so

[1] J. V. Langmead Casserley, *The Christian in Philosophy*, Part II, chap. 1, p. 181.

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the general reader may be well advised first to range himself alongside some one, specific tradition, not avoiding the details which present the difficulties as well as the rewards of investigation. He may thus escape those distortions, confusions and misinterpretations which result from a merely surface acquaintance when religious beliefs are torn from their living context and discussed as abstract propositions.

2. *The Paradox of Nirvana*

The symbol of Nirvana is the more emphatic because it is set against the distinctive backcloth of Indian belief, including the belief that present existence does not end with death: man is reborn in this world or a similar realm, and existence with all its ills may continue through a dreaded cycle of successive rebirths. Nirvana, for the Buddhist, is the word of release from this cycle.

But what kind of release does Nirvana signify? Is it the finish, the final dissolution, or a new beginning under happier conditions? Conceptions of Nirvana as ultimate annihilation, we shall term negative. They may include the view that annihilation is postponed or preceded by a brief moment of enjoyed sanctity or intellectual illumination before the final death; but in the end, man reaches his terminus and there is nothing beyond.[2] "People ... disappear for ever in Nirvāṇa by being extinct."[4]

Positive conceptions, on the other hand, interpret Nirvana in terms of fulfilment, survival and bliss, a continuation of life beyond the cycle of present, chequered existence. Such conceptions may be compared with the hope of immortality in other religions. They signify an ultimate consummation, even when the conception of individual survival is vague or absent. "Nirvana is none other than that ultimate, eternal, primordial Mystery, which all religious people have sought for, divined and intuited, which all religions have tried to express by means of weak and insufficient symbols, similes, concepts and images."[5]

Now there are terms and passages in the Buddhist literature which seem to demand a choice between these two rival conceptions. But the Buddhist system of thought implies their combination. Herein we have the paradox of Nirvana. On the one hand, Nirvana is denoted in terms which encourage a positive conception. It is the further shore, the harbour of refuge, the cool cave, the matchless island, the holy city; it is peace, rest, supreme happiness. On the other hand we appear to be confronted by curt negation. Nibbana is the Void. It is Cessation.

[2] E.g., as in the theories of Childers, Rhys Davids.
[4] Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, p. 20.
[5] Friedrich Heiler, *Die buddhistische Versenkung*, chap. 10, p. 42.

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The discovery of Buddhism, and the discovery of the Pali literature, have been compared with the impact of those Greek manuscripts which, one by one, came into the hands of Renaissance scholars after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks.[11] It is a significant comparison. Perhaps it explains the tendency of many European readers to regard the Buddhist scriptures in much the same light as Renaissance scholars regarded their Greek manuscripts — as museum treasures, as words from the past, reminders of a bygone culture. Joined with this tendency was the fashion to represent Buddhism as primarily a philosophy or a morality — a morality in search of religion, said the Christians; a morality happily divorced from religion, said their critics.

Ex oriente lux! Once again it was happening, as so often before, but this time the new light from the East was a sober evangel, just the evangel needed by an 'age of science which no longer wants to believe, but to know,' a teaching presenting 'the kernel of all religions and all metaphysics ... guaranteed in accordance with the methods of exact science.'[12] In the 'mountain of books' on Buddhism, written in the West in the last century, many of them based on the flimsiest evidence, would-be exponents have found in Buddhism the anticipation of their own philosophic preferences. Spinoza, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Bradley, Bergson and Bertrand Russell have all been cited, and have all been read into Buddhism, with confusing results. It was largely this emphasis on Buddhism *as a philosophy* which led at first to negative conceptions of Nirvana.

In 1912, a discerning Buddhist scholar in Burma uttered a protest. The Western scholar, he observed, "seems like one who has drawn forth from some 'chamber long to quiet vowed' a curious object all dented and covered with dust, concerning the origin and history of which he at once begins to speculate, without first enquiring if there are not some fresh, new specimens of the object to be found in everyday use around him. He treats of Buddhism as a dead and gone system and ignores the fact of its present existence as a living force in the lives of countless millions of his fellowmen, — pays little or no heed to the circumstance that, in addition to a literature belonging to the past, Buddhism possesses a living and active tradition in the present.

"The history of discussions at one time current in the West and not yet quite extinct, as to the meaning of Nibbāna,[13] presents a fairly charac-

[10] E.g. Woodward's translation of Vol. V of the Aṅguttara-Nikāya for the Pali Text Society, an important scripture, is dated only 1936.

[11] Rhys Davids, *American Lectures* II, 44.

[12] George Grimm, *Die Lehre des Buddha*, pp. 7, 9.

[13] *Nibbāna* is the Pali equivalent for the Sanskrit *Nirvāṇa*.

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teristic specimen of the scholar's method of setting to work upon the investigation of Buddhist ideas. Ancient manuscripts, and commentaries upon them only a trifle less ancient, were racked for every slightest word that might bear upon the vexed question, and every such finding was discussed *pro* and *con* entirely with reference to its meaning as that meaning might present itself to an *occidental* mind; and it never seemed to occur to anybody that the simplest and best way to find out what Nibbāna really meant was to ask one or two of the more intelligent among the living representatives of the religion in which the word was used to express one of its leading concepts."[14] Written in dispraise of other Western authors, this criticism was also written in very lavish praise of a new book on Buddhism by Mrs Rhys Davids[15]. In that book, the authoress was far from rejecting Buddhism as a philosophy. But she also affirmed that the Buddha himself should be recognised, not only as a Sage, but as a prophet — a prophet "who had seen in a vision of universal law, not a philosophic theory only ... but a saving Truth, a Religion, whereby he might purify his own beliefs and redeem mankind."

Once Buddhism is seen for what it is, a religion, and a living religion at that, it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile the older Western misinterpretation of Nirvana as annihilation in such a context.

4. *The Buddhist Religion*

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A glance at the long history of Buddhism shows that it has been, at different times and in different settings, a dynamic religious movement. Through many veils of legend, the Founder, Gautama,[16] is discerned as a young noble of the Sakyan clan in Northern India, some six centuries before the Christian era, who combined a sage moral insight with deep religious conviction. This conviction has been disguised for some by the fact that Gautama avoided exaggerations, for religion, by many minds, has frequently been identified with the abnormal and the extreme. But Gautama, in his first 'sermon' at Benares, preached a Middle Way. His followers were to avoid sensuality, on the one hand, and, on the other, the extremes of asceticism which he himself had practised in vain. He seems to have shared with his contemporaries a pessimistic valuation of the ceaseless round of Ill, the grim cycle of repeated, frustrating existence in which men felt themselves to be trapped, and the pith of his teaching

[14] Review in *J.B.R.S.*, Vol II, Part II (December, 1912) pp. 249ff.

[15] *Buddhism, a Study of the Buddhist Norm.*

[16] Rendered variously as Gotama, Gaudama, etc. Other names for the historic Buddha are Śākyamuni, the Tathāgata and his personal name, Siddārtha.

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a simple, straightforward affirmation, but it is not denial. No religion could so persist if it merely brought man's elemental aspirations to a sharp cliff and threw them over.

5. *Burmese Buddhism*

If there are good reasons for approaching the subject of religious paradox by a study of Buddhism, there are also good reasons for considering Buddhism as it appears in Burma where it is still a living and a dominant religion.

In the study of great religious traditions there is always need to maintain a balance between regard for the written texts and for the living expression. To consult one without the other is to misinterpret both. What the Christmas stories in the gospels mean to Christians cannot be fully discerned if they are isolated from Christmas observance any more than the Jātaka stories of Buddhism can be fully appreciated until they are read in the context of popular faith, with its drama and poetry. And what an entirely misleading impression of monastic Buddhism one might get from the Abhidhamma literature unless one has seen something of the life of a Buddhist monastery! This balance, as our Burmese critic observed, has not always been maintained in the study of Southern Buddhism.

Burma provides exceptional opportunities for such a study. "If anybody wants to know and see Buddhism as conceived and preached by the Buddha himself so far as the Saṃgha life goes," says a recent writer, "one can see a nearest approach to it in the monasteries of Burma.... Of all the Indianised lands of South-eastern Asia, Burma is indeed the only country where monastic Buddhism of the Theravāda nikāya survives to this day in its pristine purity."[24] And the same writer emphasises the impact of this monastic life on Burmese life and culture.

In Burma, eighty-five per cent of the inhabitants are Buddhists. Of these, one in every hundred is a Buddhist monk. Go where you will, you find the yellow robe of the Order, the pagoda gleaming white across the plain or on the hillside, the monastery in every village, intimately related to the life of the people. This has been the situation for centuries. Here one can see Buddhism in action; one can try to interpret its symbols in the light of the very real, if rustic, civilisation which it has shaped and maintained. Burma is one of the most interesting countries in the Orient. Its people are literate. There is freedom from caste, and, for that matter, scarcely any class system. In the days of the monarchy, "when you left the king, you dropped at once to the villager."[25] An Englishman observed,

[24] Nihar-Ranjan Ray, *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma*, chap. VII, p. 262.
[25] Fielding Hall, *The Soul of a People*, chap. IX, p. 106.

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175 792 779* But Burmese kings were not always good. The monasteries which became centres of community life in village after village have to be pictured more often against a dark background of marauding armies, political feud and violent revolt. This chequered history gives point to the suggestion that Burma owes its civilisation and 'the preservation of ... moral and mental balance' very largely to the Buddhist Order which persisted and grew apace through all vicissitudes.[33] Within the Order, there was a remarkable degree of discipline, upheld by a *Thāthanābaing* or Burmese Arch-Abbot. There was also a remarkable unanimity. [795] Although there were different schools and parties, it is significant that there is little, if any, hint of doctrinal controversy. If there had been any considerable impact of Mahāyāna interpretation, we should surely have heard more about it. What, on the contrary, is much more evident, is the 177 continued impact of Ceylon. Perhaps the most serious division was 795 occasioned by a claim that it was necessary to resort to Ceylon to main- 779* tain the legitimate 'line of descent.'[34] There were, it is true, schismatics. Non-conformist Paramata sects decried the Order and taught the existence of an immanent Divine Being, the *Shwe Nyun Daw*, a belief which may reflect either Mahāyāna or Hindu influence. By and large, however the dominating religious and cultural force was Hīnayāna Buddhism for eight centuries without interruption. We have therefore good reason for beginning a study of Southern Buddhism in a country which has been so deeply impressed by its influence.

114 121 There is also a personal reason. It was in Burma, some twenty years ago, that my own acquaintance with Buddhism began. It was during discussions with monks and laymen there that I began to think that Nirvana was the ultimate religious term of their faith — the term which symbolised the consummation of their doctrine, practice and aspiration. And the mode of expression of this Nirvana symbol seemed to me significant, not only for my Buddhist friends, but for all concerned with the study of religion and life.

[33] J. A. Stewart, "Notes on Some Authorities for the History of Burma," *J.B.R.S.*, XIII (1923), p. 75.

[34] M. H. Bode, *Pali Literature of Burma*, chap. II, p. 19.

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CHAPTER II

BUDDHISM AND ANIMISM IN BURMA

1. Animism or Buddhism?

It never occurred to anybody, remarked the Burmese critic quoted in our previous chapter, that the best way to find out what Nirvana meant was to consider its significance in some present, living tradition of Buddhism. His criticism was apposite in its immediate reference. As a matter of fact, however, it was precisely this course which *did* occur to Bishop Bigandet a century ago, as his voluminous footnotes to his translation of the Burmese Legend of Gaudama show.[1] The same may be said of his predecessor in the field, Father Sangermano, and of several successors.[2] Our present purpose is to take up the task where they left it. We hope to describe Buddhism in Burma in sufficient detail to exhibit the essentially religious character of the Nirvana paradox.

Since the context is Burmese and the reference is to Hīnayāna or Southern Buddhism, Nirvana for the time being will be *Nibbāna*, which is its form in the Pali language of the Hīnayāna scriptures. In Burmese, Nibbāna is Nebban.

One reason, perhaps, why this approach to the subject has been largely disregarded by Western scholars in recent years is the prevalent impression that the popular religion in Burma is a syncretism in which the dominant element is not Buddhism, but Animism. "Hinayana," writes Dr. Bouquet, in an outline of Comparative Religion, "is still 'the little vehicle,' because it does not and cannot appeal to the masses of any population.... It is true that it is the Buddhism of Burma and Ceylon. But anyone who knows these countries is well aware that the real popular faith of their peoples is not Hinayana but a thinly veiled animism."[3]

[1] Rt. Rev. P. Bigandet, Bishop of Ramatha, *The Life or Legend of Gaudama, the Buddha of the Burmese*, first published in Rangoon 1858.

[2] Father Vincentius Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire*, first published in 1833.

[3] A. C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion*, new ed., 1945, p. 129. Dr. J. B. Pratt's balanced estimate of the Burma situation in his *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism* (1928) should have done something to correct this impression.